Future of White Collar Work

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Figure 1: American corporations listed on U.S. stock markets, 1991-2015

In 2015, the combined workforces of Facebook, Yelp, Zynga, LinkedIn, Zillow, Tableau, Zulily and Box were smaller than the number of people who lost their jobs when Circuit City was liquidated in 2009.

*The Vanishing American Corporation*

Jerry Davis
1. The corporation (organization) is an outdated way of organizing the economy

2. Technologies are a master trend underlying the decline of corporations (organizations)

3. From the perspective of (white collar) labor, this creates a precarious world

4. What can public policy do?
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4. What can public policy do?
Organizing Technologies

1. Web page enterprise
2. Crowdsourcing, flash teams
3. Decision engines
4. Learning decision engines
In 2005, the whole thing exploded… Hardware? No, now you just put it on Amazon or Rackspace. Software? It’s all open-source. **Distribution**? It’s the App Store, it’s Facebook. **Customer service**? It’s Twitter -- just respond to your best customers on Twitter and Get Satisfaction. **Sales and marketing**? It’s Google AdWords, AdSense. So the cost to build and launch a product went from five million…to one million…to five hundred thousand…and it’s now to fifty thousand

Flash teams and crowdsourcing
Decision engines
Human decision structures (org charts)
Learning decision engines
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4. What can public policy do?
From the perspective of an entrepreneur, this means that the parts to create a business are like Lego blocks that can be snapped together and scaled up or down as needed.

From a consumer’s perspective, this means that every day brings new products and services delivered in new ways.

But from the perspective of labor, this creates a precarious world of increasing inequality, lower mobility, and a ragged social safety net.
 Corporations and organizations evolved to offer:

- Consistent earnings
- Long career ladders
- On the job learning, professional apprenticeships
  (associate to partner, resident to attending)
- Professional development
- Human resources protections
- Sexual harassment training, protection, policy
- Health insurance for employees and retirees
- Community, identity
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The underlying problem is not too few public corporations, but ensuring economic security.

Family farms were still central to the American economy at the turn of the 20th century, but it would have made little sense to address the emerging problems of industrialization by focusing on policies promoting family farms.

Similarly, large-scale corporations are a 20th century vehicle that may not be suited to the 21st century. Policy should aim to promote economic security and mobility in a post-corporate economy.
Lessons from history

The untold story of how America once created the most successful economy the world has ever seen and how we can do it again.

Beginning in 1940, massive public investment generated breakthroughs in science and technology that first helped win WWII and then created the most successful economy the world has ever seen. Private enterprise then built on these breakthroughs to create new industries…
Economic security, mobility in post-corporate economy

A new locus for:
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